TALES OF MOWER COUNTY

by

Jean H. and John Kay Adams

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Published by
Mrs. Jean H. Adams, Austin, Minn.
1949

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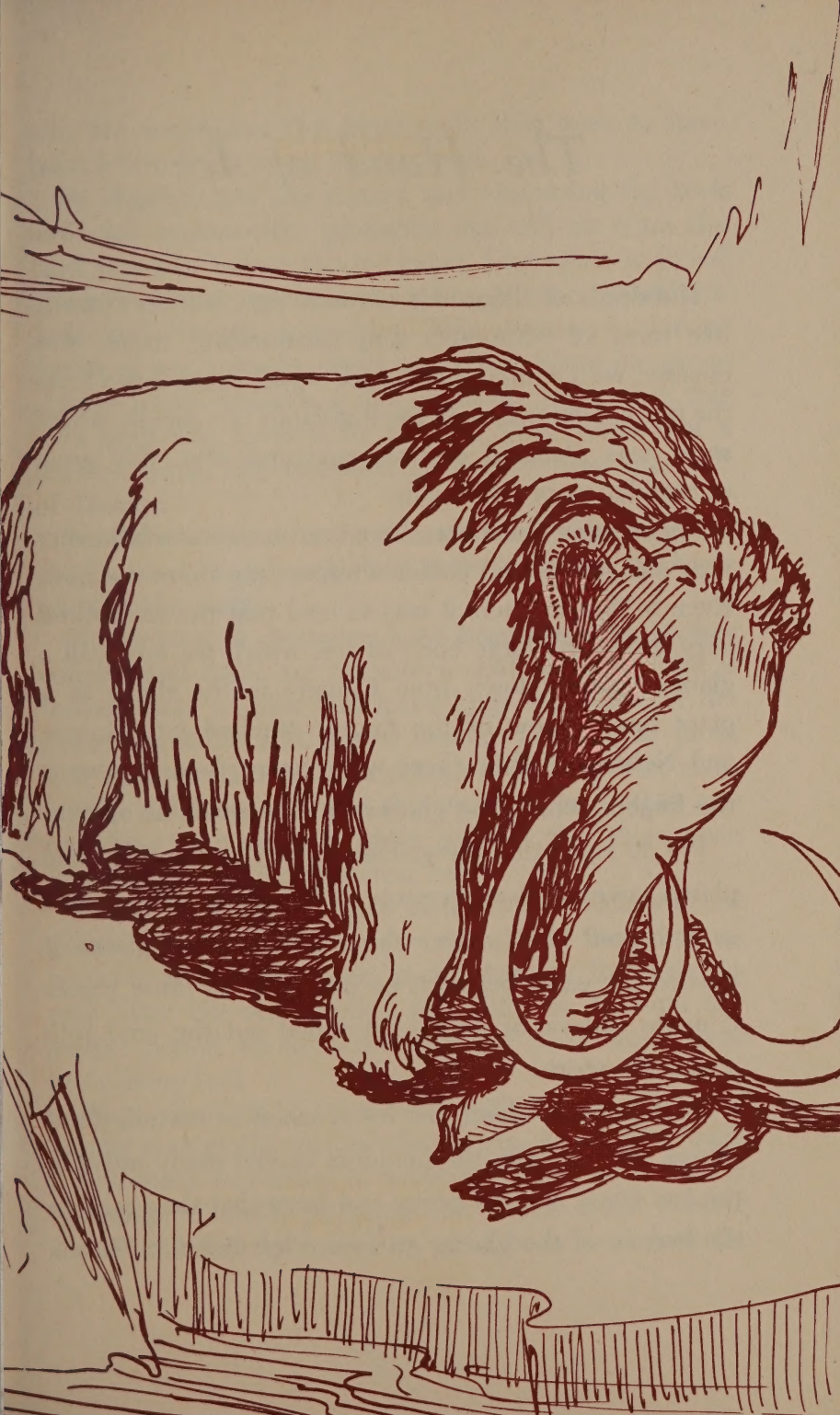


The Hand of Ice

Hundreds of thousands of years ago, Mower county, like most of Minnesota and surrounding states, was covered with a huge sheet of ice which came down from the north. Somewhere in the highlands of Canada, where snow was plentiful and temperatures low, this great accumulation of ice began.

For reasons unknown, there was more snowfall every year and longer and colder winters than there are now. Even in the summers it was so cool that the ice melted very little. The large body of ice, which we now call a glacier, spread down from Canada in the shape of a giant hand. Some of the fingers reached into Kansas and Nebraska, while there were some places, between the fingers, where the glacier did not reach at all.

We do know that the glacier, 2,000 feet thick in some places, covered Mower county. It left many telltale signs as it moved slowly over the land. In some places it pushed the earth before it up into hills. In other places it made valleys. Sometimes it rolled out the land into a smooth prairie.

As it traveled along, the ice crushed or carried giant stones. Occasionally the boulders moved many miles in the ice. Some were so heavy and large that they sank to the bottom of the glacier and were left behind. That is

why we sometimes find large rocks that seem to have been left in fields by an unseen hand.

By digging into the ground and examining the rock and clay underneath, geologists can tell us what the land was like before the ice came. Limestone is found along the Cedar river and in Le Roy, Racine, Frankford, Lyle and Nevada townships. This limestone contains fossils of sea animals, shells and coral. Since limestone always forms beneath a sea, scientists know that this area once was covered by the sea. They think that a shallow ocean bay extended northward from the Gulf of Mexico.

Sandstone, formed in fresh water, also is found along the Cedar river. Beneath these rocks is granite, the basic crust of the earth.

No remains of dinosaurs have been found in Mower county, and there are no known coal deposits. Coal is formed from jungles that leave huge quantities of decayed vegetable and animal matter. There is no proof that such jungle conditions existed here. However, great jungles did grow in South Dakota, Iowa and other surrounding territory. It is quite possible that there once was a growth of jungle forest here.

The most recent of these geological periods was the glacier era. Perhaps primative man lived then, but no bones or relics have been found. Animals lived in this area after the sea receded and right on through the glacier period up until this day, for their bones have been unearthed.

Huge elephant-like creatures with long tusks called woolly mammoths roamed the forests. A tusk from such a mammoth was found in Schwartz gravel pit in Dexter township in 1948. Probably the heavy beast became mired in a soft spot, and its great body sank into the

ground thousands of years ago.

The mammoths continued to live near the edges of the glaciers during the ice age, for they had long coats of heavy fur and could stand the cold. We know what they looked like, because perfectly preserved mammoths have been found frozen in the ice of Siberia, Russia. These frozen bodies proved that mammoths lived during the ice age. Musk ox and bison also lived here, as well as many smaller animals.

Scientists do not know why the ice age started or why it stopped, except that eventually the summers grew warmer and there was not as much snowfall. Each year the glaciers would melt a little more, and finally the ice would be gone. Then the temperatures would drop again, and the snow would begin accumulating, starting another glacier. In all, there were four different glaciers that covered the northwestern part of the United States. The first is believed to have begun more than a million years ago. The last melted about 7,000 years ago.

Giant rivers carried away the water from the melting glaciers. These rivers changed the land too as they rushed to the ocean. Both the Mississippi river and the Missouri river systems were formed by water from melting glaciers.

Mower county is on a small highland. The average elevation is 1,300 feet above sea level, slightly higher than the surrounding countryside. This highland is important to farmers, because it means good drainage in the fields.

The underlying soil of the county is primarily a blue-colored gravelly clay. It is rarely seen while plowing, but it can be found exposed in road cuts, well diggings and basement excavations. Springs of clear water bubble up through this clay layer.

Soil in which the crops are planted is only partly glacial. Most of the top soil is loam which has been formed by decomposed plants and animals that lived and died here during the thousands of years since the last glacier. This rich black blanket, six inches to two feet in depth, is the source of all of the wealth of the land.

By the time the American Indians hunted in Mower county the land was a place of bountiful plant and wildlife. Among the animals that roamed the vast, fertile and beautiful countryside were buffalo, elk, deer, muskrat, otter, wolves, mink and gophers. There were fish of many kinds in the numerous streams. Ducks, geese, and prairie chickens strutted over the rolling grassland and splashed in the ponds.

The first people who hunted here were the Highland Mound Builders, ancestors of the Sioux and Iowa Indians. Arrowheads made by the Mound Builders have been found along the Cedar river.

Centuries later this great hunting ground was claimed by the Sioux, or Dakota, Indians, but bands of the Sioux, Iowa, Sac, Winnebago and Fox Indians hunted and crossed it. The diaries of the early white hunters along the west bank of the Mississippi refer to the hunting grounds, but there is no mention of any permanent Indian village in what is now Mower county.

Since many tribes wanted to hunt on the prairie, they often met here in bloody conflict. The winners would take their load of game and depart, and the losers would retire to the forest and wait their turn at the hunt.

Unlike the western tribes, the Indians in this part of the country depended a great deal upon agriculture. They raised corn, beans, pumpkins and other vegetables on their farms. Their tools were made of bone. For

example, the shoulder blade of a buffalo attached to a wooden handle served as a hoe.

Their grass or sod houses were located in the permanent villages elsewhere. When they came to hunt, tepees of animal skins were used as temporary shelters. It is probable that the county was the location of many such hunting camps.

Indians acquired horses soon after the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico, perhaps as early as 1687. When first seen by the white pioneers, the Indians hunted buffalo on horseback. They used long bows and arrows and stone-headed skull-crackers. A globe-headed wooden club and a lance with a long blade were other weapons. Most of the tribes protected themselves with colored circular shields which were made of the thick hide of the buffalo's neck. These shields would turn aside an arrow, a lance, or even the bullet from a musket.

The most common garments were leather breechcloths, leggings and shirts. Clothing and moccasins were covered with bead and quill-work. Bright paint was used on their bodies during war dances, battles and religious ceremonies. Braves wore feathers, and both the men and women wore warm fur caps in the winter.

Indians believed in a mysterious "Great Spirit" they called "Wakanda," who ruled all the lesser gods. Their peace pipe ceremony was an important part of every peace treaty among the Indians. Anyone carrying a peace pipe could travel in safety among all the tribes. Sometimes the pipes were not pipes at all, but decorated wooden sticks.

Indians in the Midwest were a combination of the woodland type of the East and the plains type of the West. They both hunted and farmed. They roamed from the forests near the Great Lakes to the prairies of the Dakotas. They lived through cold winters and hot summers, and had to adjust their clothing and housing accordingly. They hunted everything from the small animals and fish of the forests to the wild buffalo on the range. They were versatile and enterprising, these redskinned Americans who were here when the white men arrived.

Happy Hunting Ground

The land which is now Mower county was in the undisputed possession of the Indians until August 5, 1851. They used the area for hunting, and as early as 1824, a treaty defined boundary lines on hunting grounds. The agreement was signed in Washington, D.C., by a delegation of Sioux Indians including Chief Wabashaw and Chief Little Crow.

The earliest white claim to the northwest territory was made by the Frenchmen of Canada. They were the first Europeans to trade with the Indians. In 1682, La Salle extended Canada as a French possession to the Gulf of Mexico and called the entire Mississippi valley Louisiana. After the Revolutionary war, the territory east of the Mississippi passed under the jurisdiction of the United States. Then on April 30, 1803, Napoleon of France sold the land west of the Mississippi to the United States. This was the Louisiana Purchase.

Mower county land has had many names. It was included in sections of land called the Louisiana district, the Louisiana territory, and the Missouri territory. In turn, it was part of the Northwest, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa territories. For a little while, it was part of the state of Iowa.

Iowa was a territory from 1838 to 1846. Much of southern and southeastern Minnesota was in the jurisdiction of Clayton county. During that time Henry H. Sibley was justice of the peace. Sibley lived in Mendota, and his jurisdiction extended over a land section which, he said, was "as large as the Empire of France."

On December 28, 1846, Iowa was admitted to the union as a state. At first the southern counties of Minnesota were included, but the final boundary line was established where it now is.

When Wisconsin was applying for statehood, there were those who wanted the new state to include all of the northwest territory left after the formation of Iowa. But some settlers in Minnesota, Sibley and Alexander Faribault among them, fought for the establishment of a Minnesota territory.

Wisconsin was admitted to the union May 29, 1848. The people to the west of the established border were left in a no-man's land. They were not in a territory and had no government. In August of that year, a group of settlers met in St. Paul and sent Sibley to Washington to get a Minnesota territory organized. Other names suggested were "Itasca," "Chippewa," "Jackson," and "Washington."

On March 3, 1849, the Minnesota territory was recognized in Washington. In 1856, a delegation from Minnesota territory went to Washington to apply for statehood. It was granted on May 11, 1858, when Minnesota was admitted to the union. Sibley became the first governor and superintendent of the Indians.

It is possible that missionaries, bandits, traders or hunters visited Mower county in the early days of exploration, but historians have no record of their visits. The famous explorers, such as Hennepin, Le Sueur, Lt. Z. M. Pike, Major Stephen H. Long, George Catlin and Jean Nicollet, did not go as far south as Mower county. The early explorers in Iowa did not go as far north.

The first record of white men reaching the area was published in an Iowa state document under the title, "A Journal of Marches by the First United States Dragoons,

1834-45."

The Dragoons were soldiers defending the frontier. They were stationed in Fort Des Moines, Iowa, under the command of Colonel Henry Dodge. On June 7, 1835, Companys B, H, and I started an 1100-mile march. They left Fort Des Moines and crossed Mower county to the present site of Winona, then an Indian village. They returned on August 19 without losing a single horse or man. Lt. Albert Lea commanded Co. I, and afterwards a lake and city in Freeborn county were named after him.

The next recorded trip into Mower county was made in 1836 by a party of officers stationed at Fort Snelling. Their hunting party camped one night near the present location of Austin. Major Lawrence Taliaferro was in charge of the group, which included a Negro slave named Dred Scott. Years later the slave became famous when he sued for his freedom in federal court. Scott claimed that when his master brought him into free territory he was freed automatically. The Supreme Court of the United States threw the case out ruling that Dred Scott, as a slave, had no right to sue. The decision was one of the incidents that helped bring on the Civil war.

Other hunters seeking hides and furs made trips here in 1840 and 1841. The largest hunt began in October, 1841, when a party was led by the same Henry H. Sibley who became later the first governor of the state. Sibley was 30 years old then and an agent in Mendota for the American Fur company. He secured Indian guides to lead his party. The Indians were invited to a feast. Nearly 1000 of them went. Small sticks, six inches long and painted red, were offered to each brave. About 150 Indians accepted red sticks and were considered enlisted in the winter's hunt. The Indian hunters held a meeting

and chose 10 of their men to have charge of the hunt. The leader was Little Crow, father of the Little Crow who lead the New Ulm Massacre 21 years later. In 1862, Sibley was the general commanding troops against the son of his Indian guide in 1841.

The party left Mendota with ponies, squaws, dogs and buffalo tents. There were three white men. Sibley was dressed in Indian style and equipped with a double-barreled rifle and pistols. Two big wolf dogs followed at his heels. Two French-Canadians accompanied him to help with the kegs of gun powder and other goods carried in carts to trade to the Indians for furs. They traveled about 10 miles a day.

A winter camp was made on the west bank of the Red Cedar river where Horace Austin park is now. The Indians built a lean-to stockade using crotched posts set firmly into the ground. Poles were laid on top from post to post. Then other logs were set one end on the ground and the other leaning against the poles. Brush and the tops of trees were cut and piled by the squaws outside the line of posts until it was impossible for an enemy to break through without facing the fire of expert marksmen inside. This was the first known structure built in Mower county. A stockade was necessary, because the hunters had no right to be on "neutral" territory between lands belonging to various hostile Indian tribes.

One day Sibley went out early with his two wolf dogs to hunt alone. While he was gone, Little Crow and near-

ly all the young men of the camp went south for a three-day hunt on the border and over the line into enemy territory. When Sibley returned, the squaws told him of Little Crow's absence, and that an enemy Indian spy had been seen. Sibley soon located the tracks of the Indian in the snow and immediately armed the old men and boys remaining in the camp. Each was assigned a place, and they waited for the attack.

About 3 a.m., the Indian dogs began to bark and the women screamed. The old men began to sing their death songs. Sibley ordered them silent and demanded that all guns should be fired, reloaded, and fired again. The enemy was deceived by the number of shots and did not attack. Tracks indicated that 50 warriors had tied their horses in a nearby grove. Little Crow and the braves returned the next night to protect the party.

That winter the hunters killed 2,000 deer, 50 elk, 50 bears, five panthers and a few buffalo.

Other hunters, both white and Indian, came here during the following nine years. In 1851 the Treaty of Mendota opened the area to settlement. The Indians reluctantly agreed to move onto reservations.

Wagons Roll In

The first settlement made in Mower county was on the Fourth of July, 1852, by the Jacob McQuillan, Sr., family. He, his wife and their nine children camped near Hamilton spring in Racine township. With the McQuillans were their son, Jacob, Jr., and his wife and family, and a son-in-law, Adam Zadyger.

To mark his homestead, McQuillan nailed a coffee mill (a small grinder) to a tree. While the family built a cabin out of poplar logs, they lived in wagons. There were two springs on the claim, 55 yards apart. Jacob, Sr., took the west spring and the land west of it, and Jacob, Jr., staked his claim at the east spring and the land eastward.

In 1854 a man named Booth claimed part of the land held by Jacob, Jr. Both families decided to battle it out and gathered their friends and armed themselves. But when each discovered that the other was ready to fight, they decided to settle the dispute in court. The court decided in favor of Booth and the result was financial ruin for the younger McQuillan.

Jacob, Sr., lived for several months more on his claim and then rented his farm to Thomas W. Corey, selling it to him about a year later. McQuillan then lived in Fillmore county for a while. At the age of 73 he returned to Ohio where he died.

Early settlers described the elder McQuillan as a powerful man with an iron constitution. It was said he was rough and gruff in appearance, but kind and well-liked.

Corey was a native of Massachusetts. When he settled on the McQuillan claim, he put up a small cabin, 18 by 22 feet, which was used by travelers as a hotel. The cabin was on the main route from Decorah, Iowa, to Mantorville. For overnight lodging and two meals, Corey charged 40 cents.

The second place of settlement in the county also was near the boundary line in what is now Le Roy township. In 1852 Isaac Van Houghton helped survey the state line between Iowa and the Minnesota territory. A year later he and several friends from Lansing, Iowa, decided to colonize in Minnesota. All of them sold out within a short time, but other settlers moved in.

In the western part of the county, the first settlers were "Hunter" Clark who stopped in Lansing; a man named Woodbury and his son-in-law, Pinkerton, who settled in Lyle township; and Austin Nichols, the trapper, who settled where Austin now stands.

Nichols sold out to Chauncey Leverich. Clark built a log cabin a short distance from the spot where Oakwood cemetery is located. On May 8, 1855, he sold his claim to William Baudler, and much of the land is still owned by the Baudler family.

As for Woodbury and Pinkerton, they staked their claim along the Red Cedar river in 1853, and sold out in 1855.

It was in 1855 that the real influx of settlers began. Between the years 1855 and 1860, Mower county was settled.

Moses K. Armstrong, the first county surveyor, wrote a history of the county in 1859 in which he said: "At the close of 1853 there were not 20 families within the present county, and not a hundred bushels of grain raised that season. The winter was mild so the settlers did not

suffer in their unfurnished cabins. Those who had money got provisions in Iowa, while many, who were poor, I know to have lived the whole winter on wild game and hominy bread." Armstrong stated that the game was so plentiful that a pioneer could stand at the threshold of his cabin and shoot a deer or elk.

Armstrong wrote that in 1855 long trains of covered wagons, followed by droves of cattle, came into the county. It was in February of that year that the county was organized and named in honor of John Mower, who was a state legislator from Washington county.

Settlers were on the lookout for streams where "white water" showed, indicating a place where possible water power might be developed for the operation of saw mills and grist mills. The people had to have lumber for their homes and flour for food. Austin Nichols filed his claim on land that included the site of a possible dam on the river. When the claim was sold to Chauncey Leverich, he built the first mill.

Robert Autis put up a saw and grist mill and a hotel where Turtle creek joins the Red Cedar river, and called the spot Two Rivers. Six miles south of Austin a Cedar City was named, consisting of other mills. Two miles south of Cedar City, a mill was named Troy City. None of these places developed into towns, as their founder had hoped.

Usually an entire family of settlers came by wagon with their household goods and clothing with them. Their animals tagged behind. Settlers with a cow or two in addition to their team of oxen or horses were considered fortunate. Although there were Indians in the territory, most of them were friendly.

One of the dangers was the risk of getting lost on the trackless prairie. Jacob S. Decker describes a trip to mar-

ket over the prairie during the winter of 1866. He says, ". . . I arrived in Casson in time to sell and unload my wheat. That night it snowed all night. I started for home the next morning. The roads were badly drifted. When I came to the last farm house I had the farmer go with me and start me across the lone prairie. After looking around, he advised me to go back with him and stay until Monday morning. This was Saturday afternoon. I did so. Monday morning was cloudy and it looked like snow. There was nothing to guide me, no sun was visible, and it was not less than 15 miles to the settlement north of Brownsdale.

"However, I started. There was no evidence of the summer road to guide me. The grass, weeds and hazel bushes were all snowed under. After I had gone about two miles, it was apparent that the team was lost. I stopped, tied the lines to the box, dropped on my knees and prayed to the Lord to guide the horses to the settlement on the other side of the prairie. I did not touch the lines, but let the team go as they pleased, and did not hurry them. In the afternoon I came to the settlement about one mile north of the right road. I was very happy after striking the right road. That is the only time I was ever lost."

Most of the settlers were poor. Everything they brought with them, including livestock and clothes, had to last a long while. There were no convenient stores with goods for sale, even if they had money. Everything was used over and over again.

The settlers were a friendly folk. They had to help each other. Sometimes a pioneer cabin would be built in one day, with all the neighbors pitching in. They assisted at births, weddings and funerals. They shared what they had and opened their homes to travelers and

newcomers.

The 20 townships of Mower county were settled in the 12 years between 1852 and 1864. A brief history of their settlement follows.

UDOLPHO: Thomas Richardson and his family made the first settlement on April 14, 1854. He erected a shanty and then drove to Iowa for food supplies, going as far south as Cedar Rapids for flour. He was gone three weeks. For four days he worked with one of his horses to earn four bushels of potatoes. He came back to Udolpho with a barrel of flour, a breaking plow and his potatoes. His family had subsisted on wild leeks the last four days of his absence. He planted a part of his potatoes, but in the fall he found Indian squaws had dug all but some little potatoes. He called on the Indians for satisfaction and they settled by giving him 14 elk dressed for eating.

RACINE: The first settlement in Mower county was made in what is now Racine township, as told in the story of the McQuillans at the beginning of this chapter. These families were followed by many others, among them a group of Norwegians who came from Wisconsin.

PLEASANT VALLEY: Sylvester Hills was the first settler in Pleasant Valley township. He arrived with his son, Byron, in 1854. Hills named the township after a village in the eastern part of New York in which he formerly had lived. The township has a motto, "Ora et Libora," which means "Pray and Work." The motto was adopted when the township was organized May 11, 1858.

SARGEANT: The first settlement in Sargeant township was made by John Butler in 1860. He built a house

and fenced the land before enlisting in the Northern army during the Civil war. The second settler was an Englishman named William Langton who made a claim in 1863. Henry N. Sargeant, a Canadian after whom the township is named, arrived in 1865.

FRANKFORD: Lewis Patchen made the first claim in the township on May 30, 1854. He was known as an excellent hunter and in one day killed four bears and three deer.

The second pioneer was Byron Woodworth of New York. He and his family later moved to Nebraska. The third settler was Bartlett Leathers who lived on his place until his death in 1874. On July 1, 1854, there began arriving in the county a group of 37 Norwegians who left their homes in Norway to settle in the new land. Most of these settlers staked their claims in what is now Racine township, although at the time the land was in Frankford township.

WALTHAM: The first settler was Nels Johnson, a Norwegian, who made his claim in the summer of 1855. He built a log house which had a board roof. Lumber for the roof was sawed at the Brownsdale saw mill. In the spring of 1863 he sold his land to George Johnson, a native of Leicestershire, England. An Irishman named Barney Develin was the third settler.

J. C. Mason of Massachusetts owned large tracts of land in the township and started a colony in 1864 and 1865. He persuaded several families from Massachusetts to settle on a townsite and gave anyone who would build a house one acre of land on which to build. A hotel also was erected. The Massachusetts colony did not grow as Mason had hoped, and eventually passed out of existence.

GRAND MEADOW: An Easterner once, in looking over the land of his neighbors in the new Minnesota county, exclaimed, "What a grand meadow!" That's how the township was named. The first settlement was made by Erlund Olson in 1854. He was a Norwegian and came from Wisconsin. His log house was the first in what later became the town.

DEXTER: The first settlers in Dexter township were Mahlon Parritt and his son, Dexter, after whom the township was named. They arrived in 1857. For a number of years the Parritts were the only settlers. G. W. Bowles came in 1859, stayed but a short time and then went to Missouri. He returned in 1867 and remained until 1879, when he sold his place to George Menck.

WINDOM: The township was settled in the year 1855 when Sylvester Davis arrived in the spring. He erected the first dwelling and built a tavern. It was on the road from Little Cedar to Owatonna, and his house was frequently crowded with guests. In 1857 he sold out and returned to Iowa. The buyer was Nelson Cook, a Congregational clergyman, and while he was there the place was named "Saint's Rest."

In 1856 a group of settlers arrived in 40 covered wagons from West Union, Iowa. The township had two different names, Brooklyn and Canton, before the name was changed to honor William W. Windom of Winona who became a United States senator in 1870.

AUSTIN: Jackson Wilder is believed to have made the first claim in Austin township outside of the city limits. In 1854 he claimed a large tract of land east of the Red Cedar river known as the Sweetwater claim, after a spring of clear water. Wilder moved on to

Mitchell county, Iowa, but hired a man to build a log house on the claim. Later that year, four men from Wisconsin bought the Sweetwater claim and settled it in 1855.

Several early mills were located in this township. They were crude affairs consisting of mortars of hollow logs, and pestles of hard wood.

One of the most prominent farms in the township is Evergreen farm, originally owned by A. V. Ellis, a native of New York. The farm has kept its boundaries intact for 90 years. The first registered Holstein in Mower county and the first alfalfa were raised on Evergreen farm.

LANSING: "Hunter" Clark arrived in Lansing township in the fall of 1853. He built a log cabin northeast of where Oakwood cemetery is now located. The second settler was Samuel Clayton, who came with his wife and children in 1854. The first religious services in the township were held in his house and he was one of the first blacksmiths in the county. He later sold out and went to Kansas.

RED ROCK: Three families of Norwegians settled in the township in the spring of 1855. They combined their teams and broke the three claims that season. In 1856 they sold out. They were wealthy settlers and had 70 head of cattle with them when they left.

John L. Johnson and A. B. Vaughan also arrived about 1855. Johnson built a cabin in Red Rock grove, which he named after a large red rock there, the only one of the kind to be found for many miles.

BENNINGTON: The first settlement was made by Robert, Edwin, Lucius and George T. Angell, Austin

and E. J. Hutchinson, Ira Emerson and E. J. Kingsbury, all from New York. They arrived in the spring of 1856 and some of the party later moved on to find better land. Evidently they found nothing that suited them better, for they returned and made permanent settlement.

NEVADA: The first permanent settlers were Norwegians who began arriving in 1854. Most of them brought livestock with them. The nearest market place was McGregor, Iowa, 120 miles away, and the route was bad in the winter. Wheat often sold for 40 cents a bushel, and dressed hogs for one and one half cents a pound. Another group of Norwegians arrived in 1855. The colony was called Six Mile Grove.

ADAMS: Thomas Knudtson, who arrived in Adams township in June, 1855, was the first settler. He built the first house in what was to become Adams village. The log home was 18 by 18 feet and roofed with hay and prairie sod.

In July, six Norwegians migrated from Dane county, Wisconsin. Two of them, Stephen Olson and Stephen Christianson, were frozen to death December 8, 1856, as told in chapter 11.

In the summer of 1857, all crops were destroyed by hail.

LODI: Almond Fryer and his brother arrived in the township in 1855. Almond settled on the banks of the Upper Iowa river, where he erected the first cabin. He stayed there until his death, which came before any other settlers arrived.

A. and R. Billings, the second settlers, arrived in 1863 and built the second house. The logs were cut square

and the cabin was known as the "block house." Early settlers used it for a hotel.

In 1875 a corporation was organized in the township known as the Taopi Farming Company. The village of Taopi was located on the farm, which had 5,200 acres of choice land. Of this, 4,000 acres were under cultivation. After the corporation went out of business, the land was sold in tracts.

MARSHALL: Marshall township was named after Governor W. R. Marshall, who owned four tracts of land. The original name was Beach. First settlements were made in the spring of 1856 by Helge Erickson, a native of Norway. He lived in the township until 1871. The next settlers were also Norwegians, John Osmunsen, Ole Tollefson and Gilbert Anderson.

CLAYTON: The township was not settled until 1864, when John Johnson and Hiram Thompson arrived. The reason for the late settlement was that speculators had bought up the land earlier and were asking high prices. Quite a few sales were made in 1870 but crop failures prevented the settlers from making the payments on their claims. Some land went back to speculators.

LE ROY: The second settlement in the county was made in Le Roy township in 1853, when five men came north from Iowa to make a colony Isaac Van Houghton had been a state line surveyor in 1852 and had chosen this section of Minnesota as a place of settlement.

LYLE: One of the oldest townships, Lyle was settled in the fall of 1853 by a man named Woodbury. He settled on the bank of the Cedar river and the creek which is named after him. He was followed by his son-in-law, a man named Pinkerton. Woodbury sold out in 1855 and moved to Olmsted county.

The first permanent settlement was made in 1854 by Orlando Wilder, Eben Merry, James Foster and his son, Return Foster, John Tifft and William Bean. The name of the township and town honors Robert Lyle, a representative to the state legislature in 1858.

Two Canaries

One of the main routes into the new land was the Old Territorial road, a half-broken trail from the Iowa line to the Twin Cities. At one place in the trail the road made a sharp turn to take advantage of a natural ford in the Red Cedar river. Here Austin Nichols and Chauncey Leverich built their cabins.

Austin now stands in that place, and the ford is covered with water blacked up by the Water street dam. The road is now a legend, but once it was heavily traveled by oxen teams and covered wagons. Mail carriers on horseback and travelers in stagecoaches pounded over the rough trail. In the spring the road was filled with ruts and mud. In the winter it would be impossible to see the road at all, and only travelers familiar with landmarks would be safe.

An early settler in Austin, Mrs. George Baird, made the stagecoach trip to the new little city in the winter of 1856. Her husband already was in Austin. Mrs. Baird started from Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and traveled by train and wagon to Muskoda, where the stage run began.

"At four the next morning, they called me to go on the stage," Mrs. Baird wrote. "When I got down to the parlor, the floor was covered with sleeping men rolled in blankets, buffalo robes, anything they could find, for the hotel was crowded. The stage was waiting at the door—I had never ridden in one before, and I thought it might be fun." There were seven men, Mrs. Baird, and her two canaries.

The next day it began to snow, and Mrs. Baird told of losing the trail and having to go back 10 miles to find

it. Every day it snowed, and the stagecoach tipped over many times before it was finally put on runners.

Once they crossed a creek by walking a plank, and when they came to the Wisconsin river they had only an Indian canoe to cross in, dodging chunks of ice as they went.

The travelers took the stage to Prairie du Chien and arrived only after tipping over three more times. Mrs. Baird continued, "By that time, it was a real blizzard and it had gotten very cold, too. We had to stay there for several days." The seven men decided to go back and wait until spring, and they tried to talk Mrs. Baird into returning, but she was determined to reach Austin. No one seemed to be able to tell her how to get to Austin, but she was told that the best way was to cross the river and go by way of West Union, Iowa.

Mrs. Baird decided to walk across the river, carrying her two canaries. There were large cracks in the ice, and she was afraid she might slip in. After she crossed she found that she was 15 minutes late for the stage. She stayed in the inn.

Several days later, she started out again, this time in an open sleigh. Sometimes the horses could barely walk. Her money was gone. She had started out with $40. The agent trusted her to pay the balance of $6 when she reached Austin.

They continued traveling, starting out each day at four in the morning and stopping at about 10 o'clock each night. Salt pork, bread and black coffee were all they had to eat. At a log house they found someone who had heard of Austin and so knew they were on the right trail.

"It was the coldest I can remember," Mrs. Baird wrote. "The snow was blowing so hard we could hardly see the horses. I had no woolen clothing at all and only a straw bonnet and lace veil to protect my face."

Then one night they came upon a log cabin and found that they were a mile and a half from Austin. The trip had taken 16 days. As for the canaries, they sang on the way and cheered everyone. But on the first warm day, Mrs. Baird hung the cage outdoors and one canary was killed by a woodpecker.

Like other pioneer farmers, Mr. Baird enlisted in the Union army when the Civil war came. Mrs. Baird was at home with her three little sons at the time of the Indian scare. In 1862, shortly after hundreds of settlers were massacred at New Ulm, ox team drivers brought the news that the Indians were coming. On a dark and rainy night the frightened Austin people gathered in Old Headquarters and other buildings and posted sentinels around the village. The alarm was to be three shots.

One shot was fired about midnight, but no more sounded. When dawn broke the Indian scare was over. Later Austin people learned Little Crow had fled after the uprising.

Tin Box Case

Mower county was included in the county of Wabashaw in 1849, one of nine counties created by the first territorial legislature. The organization was made for the purpose of appointing law officers. Wabashaw county included almost all of the southern part of the state. Mower county was also a part of Rice county in 1853.

By March 1, 1856, the county was sufficiently populated to deserve county status. George White, Philip Howell and William Russell were appointed county commissioners. They met on April 7, 1856, in the old village of Frankford and appointed county officers. They organized townships, school districts and election precincts and levied taxes. In the first general election, held on October 14, 1856, 374 votes were cast.

When the county seat was located in Frankford by the county commissioners, it was declared that it could not be removed except by a vote of the people. However, two of the newly elected commissioners, George H. Bemis and H. C. Blodgett, decided to move the county seat to Austin. They passed a resolution to that effect at the board meeting. Because the county had no building, the records and little tin box which contained them were considered the county seat. Wherever the records were, there was the county seat.

One day the new sheriff, J. B. Yates, and A. B. Vaughan, judge of probate, took the box containing the county records and started for Austin. That night they stopped at the three-story Tattersoll House, a new hotel built in High Forest that year. They gave the tin box to the landlord, who was instructed to give it to no other person.

Soon the outgoing Sheriff Sherman (Sheriff Yates had been elected but not yet sworn into office) and a posse of men from Frankford arrived and arrested Yates, Vaughan, Bemis and Tattersoll for grand larceny. Sherman posted guards and went after a search warrant.

While Sheriff Sherman was gone, Yates made a bargain with a hotel guest named W. Sykes. He promised to pay $20 if Sykes would help him take the box outside the building. The bargain was made and Sykes received $5 as a guarantee. It was a cold night, and Yates talked the guards into coming inside for a drink. When he had a chance, Yates sneaked out the front door. Sykes brought the box to him.

Sheriff Sherman's guards paid no attention to Sykes, but they missed Yates. They ran after him, but Yates jumped into the brush and the guards rushed past him on the path.

After the guards had gone back into the hotel Yates took the box and hid it beneath the snow. He covered the hiding place with rails, and there the box stayed for three or four days. Yates drew a diagram of the hiding place and gave it to John Patterson and C. C. Hanchett, who dug up the box and took it to Austin. It was hidden in a hardware store belonging to R. L. Kimball.

Again a search warrant was obtained by Sheriff Sherman, but the warrant permitted searching the store only. It is said that someone carried the box under the cover of a shawl to the cellar and stowed it away under a pile of potatoes while the search was going on.

The citizens from the western part of the county were alarmed when they heard of the arrests made by Sheriff Sherman. They went to Frankford well armed to liberate the prisoners. The men calmed down and no one was injured. The prisoners were released on $3000 bond and

were bound over to the next term of court at the Fillmore county seat. Before then, the matter had been settled.

On June 1, 1857, the people of the county voted and decided in favor of Austin. People in the eastern part of the county voted for Brownsdale, not Frankford. High Forest with its voters was cut off from Mower county by legislative action just in time to give Austin the balance of voting power.

The office of A. S. Everest in Austin served as the county seat until the fall of 1868, when the building of a courthouse was completed. That building was a two-story brick structure located on the corner of Main and Maple streets. In 1881, the old public square was purchased, and the present courthouse was completed in March, 1884, at a cost of $52,291.

In the early part of 1879, an effort was made to have the county seat removed to Ramsey. The bill failed to pass the legislature, although it was signed by 2,204 Mower county voters, more than the two-thirds necessary.

GRAND
OPENING

Village Promoter

Chauncey Leverich founded Austin. He bought a 160-acre claim from Austin Nichols, the man for whom the town was named. Nichols was a wanderer and moved on westward, but Leverich was an industrious and ambitious promoter.

The land he bought from Nichols included "white water" on the Red Cedar river and Leverich wasted no time. He put up a saw mill, and around it early settlers built their cabins.

That first hard winter the settlers lived mostly on wild game. In the spring other families moved into the townsite and built log cabins. Chauncey Leverich erected the first frame house that summer and A. B. Vaughan and his son opened the first store.

One of the early tradesmen in Austin was Aloysius Brown. He did a large business in furnishing flour to the settlers by having teams drawing flour from Chatfield and Decorah, Iowa, and Winona. Demand exceeded the supply, but Brown took it upon himself to see to it that every family received a sack of flour before anyone was allowed to purchase seconds. If one family arrived too late to get its share, the sacks were reopened and some taken out of each sack.

On April 16, 1856, J. B. Yates and V. P. Lewis employed Moses K. Armstrong, county surveyor, to plat the town. Vaughan and Leverich had drawn up a plan the previous fall but had neglected to record it at the county seat.

Vaughan and a man named Mason set out on foot for Frankford, then the county seat. Yates and Lewis found

out about it, finished their plat, and started for Frankford on horseback. In the dark rainy night they passed Vaughan and Mason and beat them to Frankford the next morning. Two plats for Austin were filed on April 17, 1856. The town grew westward along Water street from Chauncey Leverich's mill. Though they won the race, Yates and Lewis abandoned their plat and moved the few buildings they had into the village.

However, Chauncey Leverich did not live to see his village grow. In August, 1856, he built a building in which he planned to open a saloon on one side and a grocery store on the other. The building was not quite finished, but some groceries and liquor had arrived from Iowa. Men had gathered in the saloon side and were drinking noisily. Leverich put them out of the store after a scuffle. They began pounding on the outside of the building and Leverich went out determined to drive them away. Someone threw a broken wagon spring at him, and the blow fractured his skull. Bystanders stopped the fight, and Leverich, who was unconscious, was laid out on a buffalo robe. Dr. O. Allen was called, and the injured man was taken home.

Horace Silver and William Oliver were arrested for the crime. They were tried for assault and battery and fined respectively $20 and $10. When Silver and Oliver learned that Leverich might die, they fled the state. Leverich died but no one ever was tried for his murder.

Leverich was a wealthy man and owned much property. His dynamic personality had helped get Austin started but other pioneers continued to develop the town.

A two-story oak frame building known as Headquarters was built on Main street in 1856-57. The lower story was first used as a store. Within this building the first

newspaper was published, the first court held, and the first school and church services held. Old Headquarters was used for festivals, dances and other public gatherings. It now houses apartments and a plumbing shop near Allegheney and Jay streets.

Four business blocks were built in the next 10 years. There were six churches and three hotels. In 1868 the citizens drew up a petition and the state legislature incorporated Austin village that year. Fire broke out on March 3, 1869, when it was 15 degrees below zero. Four two-story brick buildings on the east side of Main street burned. A strong north wind fanned the blaze, but half-frozen volunteers saved several small frame buildings by tearing them down and moving them away, board by board.

Among the many improvements made in the next few years were paved streets, railroads, a sewer system and electric lights. Until 1893 Austin had used kerosene lamps for street lights and each year the city council was called upon to appoint the official lamp lighter from a large number of applicants. In the summer of that year a private concern, the Austin Electric Light company, asked the city to enter into a contract for lighting the city with electricity. When the city council agreed, the official lamp lighter lost his job forever.

The year 1894 was a trying one for the town. A railroad strike had thrown many men out of work. Feeling against the railroads ran high. The railroad company constructed a high board fence along the east side of the tracks, stopping travel across the streets. The council met and ordered the street superintendent, Chris Hanson, to tear down the fence. The reaction of the railroad company was so strong that the council found itself asking

Hanson to rebuild the fence. Later the council constructed an iron bridge over the yards at the east end of Water street. The bridge is still in use.

Agitation in 1899 concerned the liquor question. Prohibition forces published a weekly paper called the "Search Light." On election morning an "Extra" was distributed to each home. The WCTU paraded through the streets in a snow storm. Women carried banners with pictures of Frances Willard and signs reading "Will Austin Surrender to the Rum Rebellion?" and "Woe to the Man Who Putteth the Bottle to His Neighbors Lips." Votes were counted that night, and the town had gone "wet." Then the extreme "wet" element paraded the streets with brooms, bottles and other articles.

In spite of its troubles and political battles, Austin continued to grow. Merchandising and banking flourished and several manufacturing plants were started. Among these were a brick and tile company, a cement works, canning factories, a plow and harrow works, a gas company, and the Geo. A. Hormel meat packing plant which in the years ahead was to outdistance all others.

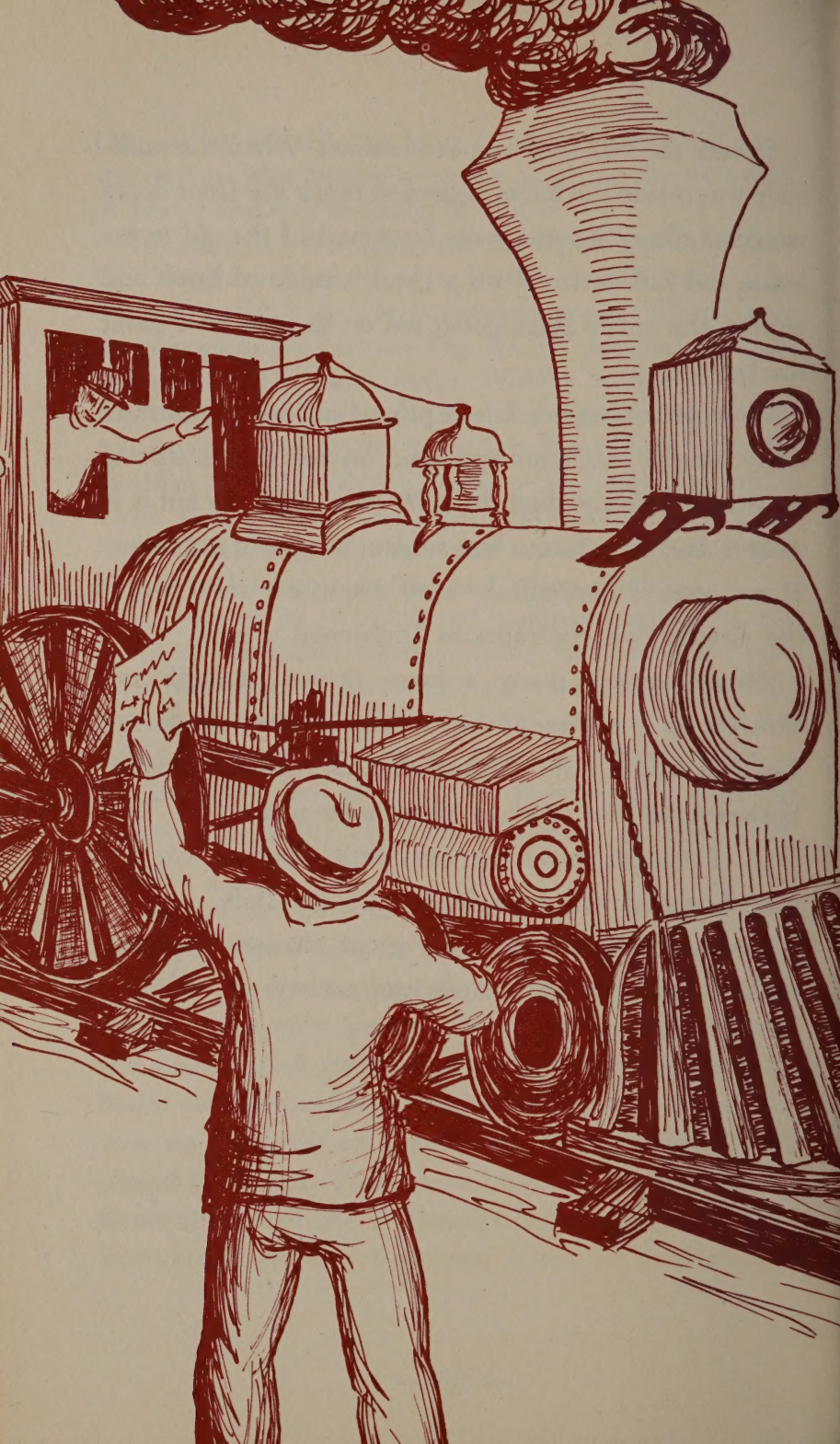
Civic-minded persons started a library, a hospital, and parks and encouraged the production of plays in the old opera house. On its stage appeared many of the great people of the early theater. There were one-night stands and weekly stock companies, magicians and hypnotists. Bands sometimes played before the shows on a balcony over the sidewalk entrance. John Philip Sousa's band played a concert. There were scientific lectures and a demonstration of one of Edison's first phonographs. The first moving pictures were seen in it.

Finally the building was condemned. When the audience was inside the floors sagged so much the front doors wouldn't close. Several years later part of the old opera house did fall down. With a great rumble of brick and mortar, the entire stage collapsed on the rear of a meat market.

With the old opera house passed an era. Monstrous, noisy, smelly machines appeared on the streets stirring up great clouds of dust. In 1909 there were 35 autos in Austin, and their future was subject to violent argument. Horse owners particularly were disgusted when one of the newfangled contraptions frightened a team.

There weren't many women drivers, though one showed up at a Sunday picnic outing when the Albert Lea and Austin Auto clubs worked on road construction between the two cities. A newspaper noted that "Mrs. S. E. Pettingill drove her own little Maxwell car and was showered with compliments for her skill."

Few could forsee then the great changes the automobile was to bring in American society.



Wood Burner

The first wood-burning locomotive hauling a regular passenger train arrived in Mower county September 9, 1867. It came in from Cresco, Iowa, and made a direct rail connection with the Atlantic seaboard.

However, the event wasn't celebrated by the people in old Le Roy. They were two miles from the station which had been erected in a new town laid out by the railroad only a month previously. Around that first station grew the present village, for the rail connection absorbed all commercial interests of the older settlement and left it a ghost town. Eventually all the buildings were torn down and old Le Roy became a park.

During the years of railroad construction in the county people in other towns always were fearful that their villages would suffer the fate of old Le Roy.

Agitation for a railroad in Mower county started back in 1854. Settlers, who had to haul their wheat to market by ox team over wild prairie, hoped for an early railroad. But that early promise was not fulfilled. Four years later a company called the Cedar Valley railroad surveyed in the county but did not build. Nine more years the farmers waited for the railroad, until the McGregor Western and the Southern Minnesota railroads came. A branch from Austin to Mason City was completed in 1869 giving Mower county 86 miles of railroad.

The railroad companies platted villages on their own land grant sections. North of Austin a railroad had platted the village of Blooming Prairie, and to the south there were Le Roy, Adams and Lyle, all laid out as railroad towns. People in Austin feared that the railroads

would ignore the village as they had old Le Roy. Many negotiations with the railroad were undertaken.

Then came the good news. The depot would be located where the Chicago Milwaukee station now stands. At the time there was not a house east of the river. A roundhouse was built and a double track laid.

The first train came into Austin on September 19, 1867. The city became the center of lines from the east by the way of Le Roy and Grand Meadow, from the north by the I and M division and the Minnesota Southern, and from the south by the Mason City division and the Chicago Great Western. This meant much to the little city. Building began on a larger scale. Lumber yards were established and shipping points were closer to the cattle and hogs raised on the farms.

The east side of the river was soon as thickly populated as the western part of the city, and in 1887 repair shops were moved from Wells to Austin. The city gave $10,000 and 10 acres of land as a bonus. Mechanics were attracted to Austin, and an ever increasing portion of the population of the little city began to work for the railroad. Pay day was mighty important to Austin business. There were as many as 500 men on railroad payrolls in the early 1890's when major work was done locally in the locomotive shops.

Austin was the terminus of five divisions of the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul line. The city became known as a railroad town. There were more passenger trains running then than there are now and the competi-

tion was keen among the numerous hotels. Each hotel employed a horsedrawn bus to meet every train. When a train pulled in the bus drivers would crowd around the coaches crying out the names of their hotels. Tom Riley used to guard passengers from the over-enthusiastic efforts of the bus drivers.

From the 1890's to the time of trucks and automobiles, the railroads did a big business here. Then came a lull, but the Hormel company began in 1891 and each year saw an increase of its freight shipments.

In the early days of railroading in the county, every engineer had his own engine. If the engineer was unable to make the trip, the engine stayed home too. At Lyle E. Hoxsie was for several years conductor of the "mixed" passenger and freight train running over the "cut-off" between Austin and Mason City. It became known far and wide as "Hoxsie's train," and the name "Milwaukee" was scarcely known or used to designate the road.

The Sod Is Broken

Mower county is among the nation's most properous agricultural counties. It lies in the wheat, corn and dairy belts. For the pioneers wheat was the main crop until 1878. The crop failure that year drove many of the wheat farmers westward into the Dakotas. Those remaining had to adjust to diversified farming.

Early farming in the county was described by O. J. Rhoades, a pioneer, who wrote about his early difficulties. He came with his parents to Udolpho township in 1856 where they pitched their tent. They had two yoke of oxen, one cow, and 35 cents.

The third day after they arrived his father was taken ill. Rhoades was 11 years old. The boy cut hay for the coming winter and attempted to cut logs for a house. Forest fires burned everything they had except the clothes on their backs and their animals.

Both teams were sold to buy provisions for the winter. Neighbors built them a log cabin. In the spring they borrowed oxen to plow a few acres. The family lived on vegetables and wild game.

The father recovered from his illness, but the boy had to do most of the farm work. By selling furs they earned money for two bulls, and broke them in to work together. They joined with their neighbors in breaking the sod and planting wheat. One neighbor had a stag and a cow for his team, the other had a yoke of oxen.

Then the father enlisted in the Union army. When he was gone, young Rhoades was in charge of the farm. He cradled the wheat, his mother raked it in, and then he would bind it.

His father went south with his regiment where he starved to death in a Confederate prison. Young Rhoades stayed in Udolpho, paid for the farm and took care of his mother. He furnished a home for his sisters until they were married. In concluding his story he wrote, "I have never had time to get married."

From these meager beginnings, agriculture in the county has been raised to the highest level in the world. The natural drainage of the land, the excellent climate and the rich loam soil have contributed to successful farming, but credit for developing the land must go to the hard-pressed pioneer farmers like Rhoades.

Farms now have modern conveniences in the homes and barns, and modern equipment. The roads are good and the farms are near markets. Mower county was the first county in the United States to have a complete rural mail route system installed.

The county raises excellent corn and hogs, and finds a market for the latter in the Geo. A. Hormel Co. The company has helped increase consumer demand for meat by making products like Spam, and using pork shoulders and hams. Increased demand means a higher price to the farmer. Hormel also offers premium prices and prizes for livestock improvement.

As late as 1884, Mower county had but four creameries. Now the county is a major dairy area, and a large producer of poultry. Purebred cattle herds abound and the small truck gardeners find a ready market in the towns.

Boys and girls of the county are active in agriculture improvement through their work in 4-H clubs. Their

parents join the Grange, Farm Bureau, and other organizations furthering agriculture.

There are now 764 boys and girls participating in 46 projects on the farms. At first there were two projects, corn for the boys and bread for girls. In 1919-20 projects were started at schools in Brownsdale, Lansing, Adams, Elkton, Grand Meadow, Rose Creek and Dexter. The first paid worker was Jessie Partridge.

In 1921, F. L. Liebenstein became the first county agent. He distributes information from the agricultural extension division of the state university and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. He also organizes meetings at which experts describe new developments in the farming industry.

The Farm Bureau was organized in the county in 1919, and a big membership drive was held the following year. It contributes to the budget of the county extension services. The county commissioners, the state and the federal government all help pay for the 4-H and county agent program.

For 66 years Mower county has had one of the outstanding county fairs in the nation. Many prizes are given for excellence of farm products to stimulate further development of the all-important farm industry.

A Walk to War

Since Allan Mollison walked to Faribault to join the Union army in April, 1861, thousands of Mower county men and women have followed him to war. Available records show that 6,145 have served in the armed forces in four wars and that 229 of them lost their lives.

During the Civil war President Abraham Lincoln asked the governor of the new state of Minnesota to send him 1,000 soldiers. But before the call reached Mower county, Mollison was off to enlist. The young blacksmith left his widowed mother and walked to Owatonna. There he met men of like intention, and they hiked on to Faribault. A company was being formed in that village by Captain McCune. Mollison joined and went with it to Fort Snelling. He was sworn into Company G, First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, on April 29, 1861, his 25th birthday.

The First regiment was rushed into action in the first Battle of Bull Run. In that action Mollison became a hero. Captain McCune was shot during a Union retreat, and when the lines reformed, he lay wounded between the battle lines. Mollison volunteered to go out and get him. He ran across the shot-torn field, and carried the captain safely to the Union lines. Unfortunately, Captain McCune died later from his wounds.

The young hero, who was born in Scotland, fought to preserve his new country in many other campaigns. He was at Balls Bluff, Peninsular campaign, South Mountain, Antietam, the Wilderness and Gettysburg.

Five times he was wounded, and once was a prisoner in the Confederate prison camp of Belle Island for three

weeks. Cpl. Allan Mollison served three years and four months. His brother Thomas was killed in the Union army and his brother Edwin was killed while serving as a Confederate cavalry colonel.

Other Mower county men followed Mollison into the Union armies. A war meeting was held here on September 4, 1861, and a company was raised. In October, 32 men left for Fort Snelling and a week later four of them were back. They were too young to join up, and they had to walk home to get permission from their parents.

The following year a company of Rangers was raised and sent against the Indians in the West. By 1864 there were 275 men in service. Of these 31 died in action, in Confederate prisons, in army camps, and on Indian expeditions.

After the war 46 men, many of them members of the Grand Army of the Republic, formed Company G of the 12th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry.

At the outbreak of the Spanish American war, Company G volunteered in a body. They left for federal service in 1898 and were sent to training in the south. The 139 men did not reach Cuba because the war was too short to require them at the front. Four of them died in army camps.

The company was called to federal service again by President Woodrow Wilson in 1916. Mower county men saw duty on the Mexican border and returned home early in 1917.

In April of that year war was declared on Germany. A recruiting drive almost tripled the size of the company in four months. On the morning of August 24 the flag came down at the courthouse and a parade eight blocks long moved to the Milwaukee depot. Everyone, including school children, fell in behind the 149 soldiers.

The unit became the 136th infantry. While in training at Camp Cody, New Mexico, one of the officers, Captain Olaf B. Damm, was killed when a recruit dropped an armed hand grenade. His brother, George, was the first one to reach the young officer's body. The accident happened a few days after the boys' parents had returned to Austin after visiting their sons. The guardsmen went to France as replacement troops.

Meanwhile thousands of others registered for the draft. Of these 582 were in general service. There were 64 men who did not return from the war. Combat deaths numbered 26.

Between the World wars the national guard company was changed to Company H, and was assigned to the 135th Infantry, 34th Division. It was called up on Feb. 10, 1941, after Pearl Harbor and trained in Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Many of the men left the unit for officers' training school or other service. Mower county men served in every war theater. The exact number has never been determined, but estimates run as high as 5,000. Navy and war department records list 130 dead. Of these 92 were killed in action, 14 died of wounds and 24 died through accident and disease.

Little Log School

Three years after Jacob McQuillan nailed his coffee mill to the tree in the northeast corner of the county, Miss Maria Vaughan was teaching school in a log house in Austin.

Even after the Austin school was opened, followed closely by one in Le Roy, many children lived too far away and had to learn how to read and write from their mothers.

J. M. Wykoff donated the land for the early Le Roy school house and it was built out of logs. The first teacher was Miss Melissa Allen.

One early school was described by Robert Weber who grew up near Dexter. He said the school building he went to was a log hut with a sod roof. There were boards on the roof, but sometimes the sod over them hung down through the cracks. There was no floor, and in the winter there were patches of ice inside where the heat from the cast iron stove did not reach. There were two small windows in the log walls. Very little light came into the room. On dark rainy days homemade candles sometimes were used for light. There were no matches and the candles were lighted with twists of paper.

The children sat on half-round log benches and learned their lessons by sharing their books. In the wintertime they all huddled around the stove which kept their hands and faces warm but not their backs. A pile of logs always was kept handy.

When someone wanted a drink of water the teacher sent a little boy or girl out to bring a bucket from a nearby well. In warm weather it was fun to go to the well

for the water, but in the winter ice might form before the water boy got back with the bucket. Class would stop until everyone had taken a drink out of the bucket with a dipper.

Some of the children walked miles to get to the school. Often they saw deer, partridge or wild geese. Schoolboys could earn spending money in those days too. Partridges were worth only 5 cents, but if a boy could catch a goose he might get 15 cents a pound for the down. The soft feathers were wanted for pillow stuffing.

In 1865 the first school house was erected in Austin on the present site of the Carnegie library building. It was a one-story brick building and cost $2,750. Four years later the second school building was built. It was of brick, three stories high, and the papers called in "magnificent in proportion and construction." The first high school was organized by Superintendent E. Biglow. The building burned on April 28, 1890, but fortunately the fire started in the morning before the children arrived.

As the population grew, the county's public educational system expanded until today there are many excellent grade schools and high schools. Austin has the largest high school in the state. The building, which was dedicated on September 24, 1940, cost $1,750,000. It also houses the Austin Junior college.

The Austin Junior college is not the first college in Austin. At one time the Southern Minnesota Normal college and Austin School of Commerce had as many as 1,200 students in one year. It was founded by Charles R. Boostrom in 1897, and was organized chiefly to provide educational opportunities for adults who were forced to quit school at an early age. The college operated until 1925.

There are several parochial schools in Mower county. German Lutheran schools, first to the eighth grades, are taught in Austin (St. John's) and in Waltham (Trinity Lutheran).

There are two Catholic school systems in Austin and parochial grade schools in Adams, Johnsburg and Rose Creek.

In 1872 a parochial school was opened by the Dominican Sisters in St. Augustine parish. It was closed in 1893. Under the direction of the Right Reverend Monsignor Devlin, Columbus school was opened in September, 1909, by the Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis of the Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes from Rochester. All grades and high school are taught. In 1926 a new building for the high school was completed and opened. The faculty includes 13 Sisters and one lay teacher in St. Augustine high school.

On September 6, 1938, the Queen of Angels opened its beautiful new parish school to the first class of 213 pupils. Seven Sisters of St. Francis from Rochester were selected to teach. An addition was added to the school and it was dedicated February 9, 1947.

PRICE
TAYLOR
POOL
FIRST

Men of God

When the first settlers left their homes and friends to make their way in the new land, they were cut off from their church ties. As soon as they had staked a claim, built a cabin and put in the first crop, they began to plan churches. There was great need for spiritual help. Life was hard on the frontier, and as time went on there were marriages to perform and babies to baptize.

To meet these needs the early Norwegian settlers founded the first small Lutheran congregations. Services were patterned after those in the homeland, though the congregations were not directly associated with the mother country.

Their growth was the result of the missionary work of Reverend Claus Lauritzen Clausen who organized them as the United Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran church of America in 1890.

Rev. Clausen came from Norway when he was 23 years old, to Muskego, Wisconsin, in 1843. He was ordained to be a minister by a German pastor and organized a congregation in that town. The log building they erected was the first Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran church in America. The church was later moved to St. Anthony Park, St. Paul.

In the spring of 1849 Rev. Clausen made a trip to St. Paul on the first steamboat up the Mississippi river. On this boat they brought the news that Minnesota was organized as a territory.

From St. Paul he set out in search of land to colonize. He came to the Red Cedar river in northern Iowa in 1852. There in a spot he later named St. Ansgar, Rev.

Clausen took a claim. The following spring he brought settlers there from Wisconsin. Rev. Clausen was first of all a pastor, but he also served as doctor, lawyer, justice, storekeeper, miller and publisher for the settlers.

Missionary work carried him to the Norwegian settlements founded in Mower county in 1855. In June, 1856, he established congregations in Adams and Frankford townships.

In Adams township the settlers met the first time in the home of the late Stephen Olson and Stephen Christianson. Both men had frozen to death the previous December, six months after each brought his wife and child to the settlement.

One morning the two young fathers went to Six Mile Grove in Nevada township. Provisions were loaded on wagons, but on the return trip a snow storm set in. Both ox teams came home alone that night. A search party set out and found the bodies three days later in Lodi township. These funerals were among the earliest services held by the Lutheran group.

The congregation was organized as the Little Cedar Norwegian Lutheran church in 1859. A church building was built in 1863, and each member of the congregation donated logs for the cabin.

In Frankford township the church was called the Bear Creek Norwegian Lutheran church. The congregation was organized in June, 1856, and built a church in 1870 in a grove on the northern side of Bear Creek. Among the other congregations established by Rev. Clausen in 1859 were Six Mile Grove in Nevada township, and Red Oak Grove in Udolpho township.

Rev. Clausen preached to these congregations, traveling from one to the other on horseback. There were few sermons in them during the Civil war, because Rev.

Clausen enlisted as a chaplain in the Union army. After the war he returned to his churches located throughout southern Minnesota and northern Iowa.

In 1865 Rev. Clausen preached the first service of his denomination in Austin and on October 28, 1867, he organized St. Olaf Lutheran church. St. Olaf has the largest congregation of any church in the county.

Nearly all denominations are represented by thriving congregations in Austin, the villages and the farming communities throughout the county. Church steeples are landmarks everywhere, and well kept buildings are the prides of the congregations.

Among the earliest of the congregations were the Free Will Baptists. They built a church in the fall of 1857 in old Frankford village. The year before they had held meetings in the home of Lewis Patchen. Meetings were held in this church by other denominations, among them the Methodists.

At the same time in Brownsdale a First Baptist church was being organized by Reverend Milo Frary. He was an early settler from Connecticut. The Baptists met in a school house until 1870 when a church was erected. Le Roy had a First Baptist church in 1856. For a time they met in a blacksmith shop and school house. A church was erected in 1869.

History tells us that in Austin the first sermon was preached by Reverend Mapes, a Methodist, in the Snow and Wilbour hotel. He was followed by another Methodist and then a Congregationalist.

Three early churches in the city were located along St. Paul street. The First Methodist church building had the first bell and the first cabinet organ in the county. It was dedicated in 1863. An early church built by the Presbyterians was located just north of the Methodist

church. The building, used in later years as the GAR hall and still later as a plumbing shop, was torn down in 1948 to make way for the St. Olaf parish house. A third church, located on the corner of St. Paul and Water streets, was dedicated by the Congregationalists in 1868.

The first Catholic church in the county was built in 1859 in Adams township in Johnsburg then called Johansburg. The church was named St. Johns, and it was a log hut 16 by 20 feet and 10 feet high. The first resident priest was Father B. Bowman.

Earliest records tell us the first priest to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in Austin was the Reverend Father Pendergast, who officiated in the home of Thomas Gibson, November 2, 1857. He returned in 1858 and 1860 to say Mass in private homes.

From 1861 to 1865 the Reverend Father Keller from Faribault visited Austin periodically. The question of building a church was discussed and the present site of St. Augustine church was given to the small congregation by Yates, Lewis and Fake who were not Catholics. The first little church, located on the site of the present parish house was named St. Austin. It was completed in 1868 and the Reverend Father McDermott became the first resident pastor.

The Reverend Father Daniel O'Sullivan came to St. Augustine Parish in 1883. It was during the years of Father O'Sullivan's pastorate that the present beautiful church was built. The cornerstone was laid in April, 1894. Father O'Sullivan did not live to see the church dedicated. He died in June, 1896, and the church was dedicated on November 26.

The Reverend Edward H Devlin succeeded to the pastorate. Like other religious men in the city he took an active part in the temperance campaign.

Possibly the best remembered celebrations in Austin are the St. Patrick's Day temperance parades. Every March 17 from the Spanish American war to the end of World War I, the colorful Irish parade would be held in the morning after Mass. A guest speaker urged men to give up liquor, and many took the pledge.

Afterwards, Johnny Mears led the procession on a prancing horse carrying a magnificent green flag. Next came one of Mears' fanciest hacks decked out in green bunting. Riding in the hack were Father Devlin and usually Representative J. J. Furlong.

Behind them came Frank Tichy's town band blaring out gay Irish tunes. All the Irish in the countryside followed. Some non-Irish were in the parade. A prominent one was Price the Tailor who each year advertised "50,000 Shamrocks for 50,000 Irishmen."

After the parade there was a big dinner in a hall downtown where the celebrants stuffed themselves for 50 cents each. In the evening everyone saw Dooley McCormick in a play at Columbus school.

BILLIES
BAR
GENERAL STOR

Notorious Judge

Of all public officials elected in Mower county, none was more controversial than Sherman Page, the notorious judge of district court. The years 1867 to 1881 are known as the "Page Era."

Page came to Austin from Decorah, Iowa, in 1865. He was a young Vermont lawyer, and entered into partnership with E. O. Wheeler, a private banker and a real estate dealer. During the next 16 years Page split the town and county into two factions: Page and anti-Page. Each side was supported by at least one newspaper and the warfare between the two was bitter. Those opposed to Page pointed to him as a hypocrite and a monster of corruption. His friends called him a model citizen and an upright reformer.

Page's first office was that of county superintendent of schools in 1866 for which he was paid a salary of $400. His first official act was a newspaper notice announcing a teachers' institute in the county schools. The school boards objected to such activities during the regular school day. When one trustee locked the doors of an Austin schoolhouse against Page, the county superintendent chopped his way in with an ax, and then began the institute meeting.

Page was arrested but paid his bond and was released. Promptly Page forced his way into the schoolhouse and held his institute. Such actions brought criticism in the newspapers, notably the Mower County Register. At first Page was given a column in that paper to answer accusations against him. But when the fight became more bitter, this privilege was taken away. However in 1867 a

new newspaper, the Mower County Transcript, was started and supported Page.

The county school board appointed Sheldon T. Otis superintendent when Page's term expired. Much more was to be heard from Sherman Page. The teachers organized an association and elected him president. There followed a series of incidents that stirred additional trouble.

One such incident concerned the laying of a sidewalk. Page and his partner, Wheeler, owned a team of horses which were kept in a barn on Bridge street. The city placed a board sidewalk in such a manner that they could not drive out of their lot to the street. One day the enraged Page got an ax and chopped up the section of new sidewalk blocking his driveway.

When the sheriff tried to arrest him, Wheeler locked the officer in the law office. Passers-by came to the rescue of the sheriff and helped him take Page to justice court. At the trial someone suggested that Page be sent to an asylum and given a cell from which no sidewalk crossings were visible. Page was fined $15, but the trial cost the city $400.

In 1871 Page was elected state senator by 100 votes, without carrying a single Austin ward. He served one session in the senate and in the fall of 1872 was elected judge of the tenth judicial district court.

The Page and anti-Page fight became more intense after the new judge took his place on the bench. Name calling reached a new level when the editor of the Transcript called the editor of the anti-Page Register "a little bundle of sin and corruption insensible to the truth as a dead shell of an old oyster."

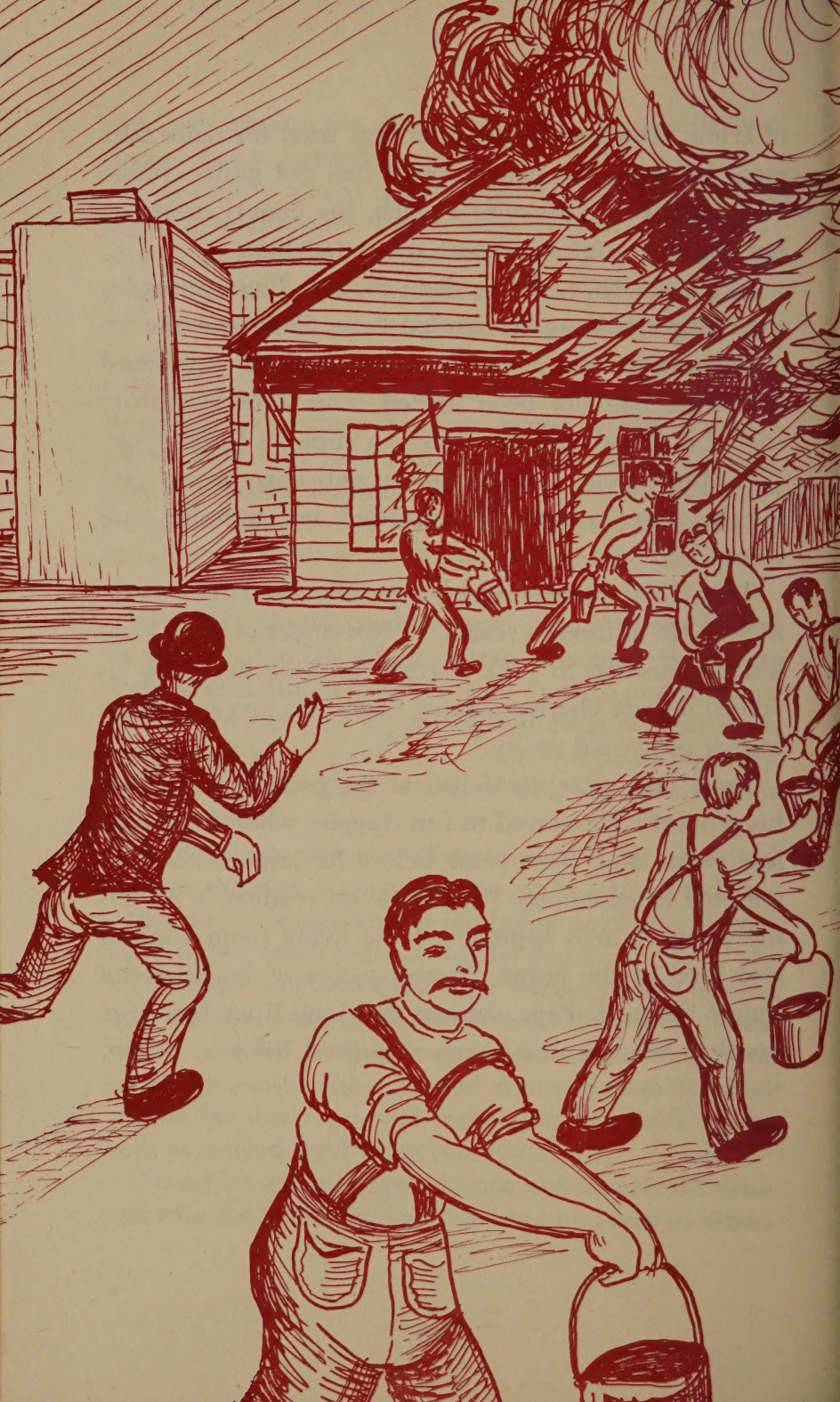
During his career Page was accused of corrupt dealings with the railroads, and Page in turn accused others

of crime. The county treasurer was tried for embezzlement by Page, but a jury found him not guilty. Judge Page disbarred Lafayette French, the county attorney, but the state supreme court reinstated him.

In July of 1877, the St. Paul Pioneer Press printed a scorching article against Judge Page. Page had the reporter arrested and sued the paper. A grand jury found that Page had not been libeled. The state legislature tried, but failed by a few votes, to impeach Judge Page. The Minneapolis Tribune ran an anti-Page article saying he was "technically acquitted but morally convicted."

Then 1500 citizens signed a petition for Page's resignation. He refused to resign. In November of 1879 Page lost the election to J. Q. Farmer, and the first case involved perjury charges against Page. The jury found the former judge not guilty.

Some time after his defeat at the polls Page sold all his property. He moved to Los Angeles where he died a few years later. Two years before he left someone attempted to assassinate Page as he sat reading in his living room. A man approached the living room window and fired at the judge. Several pieces of buckshot hit him in the neck. Page claimed that John Riley had been hired to kill him, but a jury acquitted Riley.



Pork Packer

Early in November, 1891, George A. Hormel began a packing house in Austin that developed into a nation-wide industry centered here.

George was the oldest boy in a family of 12. He was born in Buffalo, New York, December 4, 1860. His father was French and his mother was German. For a time the Hormel family lived in Buffalo and then moved to Toledo, Ohio. George's father was a partner in a tannery and wool pullery. George worked there, but when he was 13 years old a depression made support of the large family difficult. The oldest boy quit school and went to work. Though George never found time to go back to school, he developed an intense interest in learning and the happenings of the day. He learned to speak and write well by teaching himself.

George was delivery boy for a market and worked on construction jobs. Later, in Chicago, he worked in a packing house market owned and operated by his uncle, Jacob Decker. He learned how to cut hogs, render lard, and cure and smoke hams and bacon. In Kansas City, George was buyer for a wool and hide house when he was 19 years old.

Later, young George returned to Chicago and got work there with the largest hide, wool and fur company in the United States. He was assigned a territory north of Des Moines, Iowa. For more than seven years he worked this territory, stopping many times in Austin. He became a close friend of S. D. Catherwood, then a young lawyer. They were lifelong friends.

Hormel was 27 years old when the Austin meat mar-

ket of Anton Friedrich burned to the ground. Friedrich was tired of the business and Hormel was tired of traveling all the time. They made a deal, and Hormel went into business with A. L. Friedrich, who was Anton Friedrich's son.

Hormel told his employer in Des Moines about the chance to go into the meat business. He needed $400, and the sales manager in Des Moines let him have it. The understanding was that he was to repay the loan in six months or return and work it out.

After he decided to start in business in Austin, Hormel wrote a letter to his mother in Toledo. Part of it read:

"Dear Mother:

". . . I am sure of success at Austin, Minn., more so than ever I was before in any enterprise. Guess I won't tell you how nice and complete the market will be. Will see how trade opens up . . . Now don't think I am going to be just another butcher—that isn't what I am going into. It is the Pork Packing business that I am about to enter into, and of course we must have a Packing house to retail the trimmings and offal . . . I can find plenty of business to keep the flies off from me—but it will take the first year to get things straightened around. So don't say that I am a butcher—but a Pork Packer. We must hold our head up in the world. Now laugh!

"Hoping these lines will find you happy and well, I remain ever,

Your Son,

Geo. A. Hormel"

From this letter we see that Hormel approached the venture in Austin with high hopes and great confidence. The market opened in October, 1887. Under Hormel's ambitious supervision more sausage was made than could be sold in the store. Some of it was sold to the markets in nearby towns. This extra work made the market a different partnership than the comfortable business Friedrich wanted.

The partnership was dissolved. Hormel thought he would move to Fort Dodge, Iowa, then in the center of the corn-hog belt. He decided to stay in Austin which had 3,900 people then. No one paid much attention when across the Red Cedar river among some scrub oak trees, Hormel and his helper, George Peterson, began hammering and sawing on a little creamery building. Hormel and Peterson made a runway between the hog pens and the killing pen. They put in a Jones scale, a sausage stuffer and a power-operated 100-pound sausage chopper. The engine for the latter was a small two-horse power outfit. The "put-put" of the little engine and the noise of the chopper made the place sound industrious.

A month after the packing house started a meat sales room was opened on Mill street, then called Bourbon avenue. Hormel was warned jokingly not to try to get customers to come past the many saloons to his market. But the people did pass the saloons. Hormel's meat cutters wore white jackets and caps, and the shop was spanking clean. Soon he had the largest meat trade in Austin.

Only a few hogs were handled in the packing plant the first year. Six men working there butchered 610 hogs. They labored for months to produce one full carload of side pork for shipment to Chicago. In those early years credit was needed to expand the business. For

years Hormel borrowed against the money he intended to make in order to enlarge the plant.

In February, 1892, George married Lillian Belle Gleason. The couple rented a house on St. Paul street for $12.50 a month and Mrs. Hormel received an allowance of $35 a month for household expenses. She managed nicely on that money and paid cash like everyone else for meat in her husband's market. Jay Catherwood Hormel was born that year.

In the panic of 1893, times were hard for the new packing plant. George's brother, Herman, came to Austin to manage the market in March. The store had been moved to 417 North Main street, next to the old post office. Brothers John and Ben arrived for work. Competition with big packers had become more difficult. Railroad refrigerator cars meant larger eastern firms could deliver in every community. There were hundreds of small packing plants west of the Mississippi before 1893. Only four survived.

To hold out, the Hormels had to make every penny count. George himself took branch line trains and sold sausage. On his return he walked a mile from the railroad station to save paying Johnny Mears a quarter for a hack ride. John Hormel rode around the countryside on his bicycle selling sausage. He peddled as far as Preston, 50 miles away. Customers liked the sausage and asked for more. It was the sausage and its good reputation that pulled the business through. In spite of hard times and new competition, 2,532 hogs were dressed that year.

The business made steady progress after that. A delivery wagon was given to Hormel in 1895 by his father who had come to live in Austin. "Tip," the calico mule, pulled it. That year Hormel was elected city alderman

at large.

In 1896 another crisis came; fire in the packing house. Hormel rode to the plant at a mad gallop while Mrs. Hormel stood in the front yard with her young son, Jay. There was a red glow in the east, and it appeared the whole packing house was on fire. Joe Lapprell was so excited he came to help with his overalls on backwards. A bucket brigade fought the fire until the city could get some hose across the river. One smoke house, the new brick building, the ice house and the out buildings were saved. But the original wooden creamery building and one of the little brick smoke houses were lost.

Geo. A. Hormel & Co. progress was continuous, but eventful. In 1916 a flood broke the Water street dam and drained the mill pond. John Hormel rushed to Minneapolis to find and purchase an oversized water pump to draw water for the refrigeration. While he was gone the men built a sump in the river to catch water. The railroad put on a special train to haul the pump. When the plant's own water intake pump failed from the low water level, the emergency pump was ready for use. It saved the meat in the refrigerators.

Trouble of another sort came to the plant in 1921. A dishonest company official, named R. J. (Cy) Thomson, stole money over a number of years. He juggled checks so the money would not be missed. It was Jay Hormel who finally found the flaw in the bookkeeping. The heir to the firm worked in the plant, and one day he went into the accounting department to look up some figures. He thought he found an error, but he could not be sure. So he called in Richard Banfield and asked him to spend an evening with him looking over the books. It was not long until Jay, with the help of his banker friend, found that something was wrong.

Jay told his father about it and George said, "I was suspicious of that Thomson. I wouldn't be surprised if that fellow has got away with a hundred thousand dollars."

"Dad, it looks like more than a million," said Jay. "I think we're broke."

Actually, there was $1,187,000 missing, and the company was broke. Thomson was tried and sent to jail, but the money was gone forever.

It was the personal integrity and individual credit of George Hormel that enabled the firm to survive. For a time it looked as though the buildings and the stock would have to be sold to pay the creditors. But George Hormel told the bankers how he had struggled to build his business. He told them of the growth of the plant, the sound condition of its inventory, its good will in the meat trade, the reputation of Hormel products.

Not only did the company survive and pay its debts, it continued to expand. In 1924, more than a million hogs were butchered. Foreign exports that year amounted to one third of the business.

In 1927 Hormel decided he wanted to retire, so he built a home in California and moved there with Mrs. Hormel. They gave their home on Water street to the Austin YWCA.

Two years later Hormel retired as president and became chairman of the board. His son, Jay, became president. Under Jay's guidance the company continued to grow. It now manufactures more than 750 products. Every year new foods have been developed. Many of

them, like Spam, Flavor-Sealed Ham, and Chicken, are original with the company.

Geo. A. Hormel & Co. employs about 7,000 persons, 4,000 of them in Austin. H. H. Corey is president and Jay Hormel is chairman of the board. In 1948 more than 2,800,000 animals were processed in Austin and other plants in Mitchell, South Dakota; Dallas, Texas; and Fremont, Nebraska. Branch offices are located in 17 cities and sales agents in 181 other cities, but Austin continues to be the main plant and center of operation.

George A. Hormel died in 1946 at the age of 85. He had seen his small packing plant develop into an industry serving the farmer, stockholder, employe, and consumer.

JOIN NOW
UNION

A Union Town

The year 1933 was an important one in the history of Mower county. It was then workers in the Hormel meat-packing plant in Austin formed the first strong labor union to deal, as a united group, with their employer. That union and the early difficulties between the Hormel company and the men who worked there grew out of the great national depression of the 1930's.

In order to study those events we will have to begin a few years earlier and see what was happening in Austin and in the rest of the nation.

An early union in Austin started in 1915. For several years it represented those who worked in the plant, but in 1921 that first union disbanded. Then in 1929 the New York stock market prices dropped. It was the beginning of the great depression that was to touch Austin as it did every other community in the United States.

Like other towns where the people worked in a factory, Austin suffered in that depression. There were bad times on the farms in the county, too, and many farm workers came into town. Since there was no work for these people, many of them were unable to pay for food, clothing and housing.

Some lived in shacks along the river. Some moved into empty buildings on the county fairgrounds. A few families lived in tents. Although most people still lived in houses, the plight of the more unfortunate caused much unhappiness and unrest. Besides, the jobs were getting fewer all the time.

As it is today, the Hormel company was the main employer in Austin. Company officials tried to help out by

spreading work among as many families as possible. Some workers planned a share-the-work program so more people could earn money by working part of the time. Those working part-time paid a portion of their small checks into a fund to help those not working. Many called it a "share the misery" plan.

All over the nation wages were being reduced. Finally the Hormel company had to lower wages too. In the early days of 1933 the government in Washington passed a law called the National Recovery Act. It was an attempt to help bring back good times. Here in Austin provisions of the law encouraged the workers to organize another union.

In those troubled times leaders among the plant workmen began the union that grew up to be the United Packinghouse Workers of America. These men, who later became union officials and leaders, called a meeting of plant workers in Sutton park in Austin. At that meeting they decided to form a new union and call it Local 1 of the Independent Union of All Workers. They wanted to bring all workers in the industry together in one great union regardless of the particular job of each man.

This idea was not entirely new. It had been originated after the first world war by an organization called the International Workers of the World, the IWW. Men in that organization wanted to bring all workers together regardless of their particular trades. Application of similar ideas in Austin resulted in the growth of the United Packinghouse Workers of America. The same general union plan is used by the Congress of Industrial Organization, the CIO.

Frank Ellis, who is a vice-president of the present international UPWA, was one of the leaders of that early

union in Austin. Previously he had been an organizer for the IWW. He now says the organization formed in Sutton park stimulated the formation of the CIO two years later.

A temporary president was elected in that Sutton park meeting. The new union officers talked with Jay Hormel in an effort to get the union recognized by the company. They wanted to speak for all the workers in the plant. However, the Hormel company did not want to recognize the union on that basis. They were not convinced that a majority of the workers were represented.

Several months later union leaders arranged a strike in order to force the company to deal with their organization. Union men and company officers sat up and talked all night long. At 7 o'clock in the morning many of the workers stayed away from the plant. Forty-five minutes later the officials agreed, and the new union was established.

Both sides signed a contract that recognized the union's right to speak for the workers in the plant. Any serious arguments between management and labor were to be decided by a board of outside referees, called arbitrators.

Less than a month later the union demanded a wage increase of 20 cents an hour for all of the workers. The Hormel company declined, so the union asked for arbitration. Again the company declined, saying wage rates were not a part of the contract.

Union members held a meeting and decided to strike. Later Ellis said that union officers had no intention of calling the men out on strike. They wanted the vote to strike to help them bargain with the company, he said. The vote was taken the evening before Armistice day and the workers decided to strike if necessary.

Right after the votes were counted that evening, some of the members rushed from the union hall to the plant. Without getting permission from the union leaders, they called out the crew working in the sheep killing department. Union leaders say they had no choice when that happened. They had to call a full strike.

Workers were united and the plant shut down completely. The union men took full control of the buildings. They ran everyone out and forced Jay Hormel and other officials out of the company office. Company officers were all on the outside looking in.

City and county officials were afraid that the refrigerators would be shut off and that all the valuable meat in the storage coolers would spoil. Union members say they kept a maintenance crew tending the refrigerators. Officials asked the governor of Minnesota, Floyd B. Olson, to help settle the strike. Governor Olson came to Austin himself and talked to the workers at a meeting in the Austin armory. When the strikers and the company officers refused to meet, he acted as a messenger between them.

Governor Olson tried to bring the people together and finally suggested that the question be decided by the Minnesota Industrial commission. Both sides agreed to that and the strike was ended on its third day, November 13, 1933.

The industrial commission decided that a wage increase was needed, but not the full 20 cents an hour that the workers had demanded. The raise was five to eight cents an hour, and that wage increase became the standard throughout the packing plants in the United States at the time.

The end of the strike did not bring permanent peace in the Austin plant. One trouble was that sit-down

strikes became frequent in February of 1934. These work stoppages seemed to have been part of a union campaign to bring all plant workers into the union. The sit-down strikes were called in departments where most of the people were union members. They were protesting against those workers who did not join the union. Such strikes lasted for a few hours or perhaps a day.

These small strikes stopped in 1938 when the company became convinced that the majority of the workers wanted everyone in the union. A union shop agreement was signed. All workers in the Austin plant were covered except office help and supervisors.

In 1940 relations were further improved when the present agreement was signed between the company and the union. That agreement is a carefully worked out plan developed since 1933 by both management and labor.

Meat packing is a seasonal industry in which there is a great deal of competition. Standard wage rates for work in the Hormel plant are about the same as they are in similar plants elsewhere. However, there are many special provisions that make the Hormel plan outstanding.

One of the most important of these is the yearly wage plan. Under it, a workman in the Hormel plant gets paid each week in the year. Some of the weeks he does not work very many hours. In other weeks, when there is a lot of work to do, he may work extra hours. But his check is always ready on pay day. Many special products such as Spam, canned ham, canned soup, and chili con carne have been developed in the plant so the men can be busy all year.

A second provision is an incentive payment made for fast and good work. The incentive payments are made each week. At the end of each year, workers in the plant and owners of the equipment share in the earnings the plant makes during the year. This is called the joint earnings plan and when there are profits the checks are issued before Thanksgiving.

There are many other sections in the complicated working agreement between the union and the Hormel officials. Union members give Jay Hormel credit for originating provisions of the plan. They say that he is mainly responsible, from a company point of view, for the development of working agreements. In the union the major leader is President Ralph Helstein of the United Packinghouse Workers of America. He saw the advantages of the plan and helped it along through the years. Helstein has stated that he hopes the plan eventually will be adopted by the entire packing industry.

In 1937 the Austin Local 1 of the Independent Union of All Workers joined the national CIO. Workers in eight industries had started the CIO in November, 1935, and elected as president John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers.

The Packinghouse Workers Organizing Committee was the name given to the Austin group when it affiliated with the CIO. In the years following 1937, Austin labor leaders helped organize workers in other packing plants all over the nation. The name of the Austin union was changed again in 1943, and the organization now is known as Local 9, UPWA, CIO. Frank W. Schultz is president.

There are 5,500 union people working in the Hormel plant in Austin. That is about half of the wage earning population of the city. Unemployment is very low and the workers, assured of regular wages, keep their money in circulation. Business is generally good. About 80 per cent of the union people own automobiles and 74 per cent own their homes.

Following the lead of Local 9, other groups of workers in Austin have formed CIO unions. Store clerks, waitresses, truck drivers and mechanics are unionized and Austin is considered one of the most completely organized cities in the nation.

AUSTIN DAILY HERA

Sunday Paper

A newspaper was established in Mower county in 1858 when citizens of Austin lured an early printer, David Blakely, away from Bancroft in Freeborn county. They made the printer register of deeds here so that he would have a guaranteed income. That first sheet was called the Mower County Mirror and it lasted two years. Then Blakely moved to Rochester, established the Rochester Post, and later went to Chicago.

In all, 15 newspapers have been started in the county, eight of them in Austin. Many began in the 1880's and 90's and had such colorful names as the Dexterite, the Brownsdale Leaflet, the Racine Recorder and the Rose Creek Rose Bud.

Weeklies continue to thrive in the larger villages in the county. They are the Adams Review, established in 1897, and the Lyle Tribune, 1893. The oldest still printed is the Le Roy Independent which was started in 1875. Many others perished for a variety of reasons, usually lack of circulation and advertising income.

Of all the troubles that beset these pioneer editors, probably no disaster was as sensational as the collapse of the Register building at the corner of Main and Maple in Austin in 1883.

On the third floor of the store and office building were the Masonic lodge rooms and heavy presses owned by the Register. Workmen warned those inside that the foundation was crumbling, and the last employe of the Register left the building just as the presses went crashing down through the floors into the basement. A surprised customer in the first floor dry goods store nar-

rowly escaped injury.

Somehow, Editor H. O. Basford got the Register out the following week, but in the early 1900's the paper lost out to the booming Herald.

The main newspaper in the county is the Austin Daily Herald, published by H. E. Rasmussen. It started as the Austin Democrat in 1881. It changed owners several times and became the Austin Daily Herald on November 9, 1891, when the first issue was printed in the building at Main and Water streets.

What was it that enabled the Herald to grow and live longer than any of its early rivals?

The answer, given by Mr. and Mrs. John Skinner, is Billy Sunday's sermons.

In the spring of 1906 there were five papers in Austin. The Daily Herald was smaller than the Register, and the Transcript had more circulation than either of them. Competition was keen among the little papers.

The Herald was operated by John Skinner and Gertrude Ellis Skinner. They were married in 1900, a year after Skinner bought the Herald. He was a native of Northampton, Massachussets, who had been teaching school in Minnesota when he met and married Gertrude Ellis. At the time of her marriage, she was county superintendent of schools.

The Skinners were running the Herald together in the spring of 1906 when the visit of Billy Sunday was announced by the church people. Billy Sunday was a former baseball player turned evangelist. The church people built a tabernacle on the present site of the Terp ballroom. The wooden building held 5,000 persons.

At first Mr. and Mrs. Skinner were not in favor of Billy Sunday's trip to Austin. The saloon keepers were violently opposed to Billy Sunday. They decided they

didn't want the papers to mention the sermons at all, and they tried to bribe some of the editors. Skinner was offered $500, or whatever he wanted, to ignore Billy Sunday. But he told the liquor agents that no one ran the Herald but its owners.

"If Billy Sunday has a hundred people at his services he will get a quarter of a column," Mr. Skinner said to the liquor agents. "If he has a thousand he will get two columns every night, and if he fills the tabernacle we will give him the entire Herald."

Billy Sunday filled the tabernacle. Night after night the people came for miles to hear him. They jammed the barnlike building every evening for six weeks. On Sundays the tabernacle was full in the afternoons and evenings.

The Herald carried from four to six columns of type each day and on Mondays they printed eight to 10 columns. Both the Skinners attended the meetings every evening and every Sunday afternoon. When a meeting ended they went home and Mrs. Skinner began at once to work on the speech. She had copied it in long hand. At the same time, Skinner worked on the feature stories about the meeting and a description of what happened.

Since there were no typesetting machines in the Herald then, Skinner put the copy on an early morning train to Owatonna. In the office of the Owatonna Journal-Chronicle, the linotype machines rattled all morning, and the type came back on the noon train. In the afternoon, it was run off on an old flat press. The Skinners wrapped the evening papers for mailing, ate sandwiches or a bit of fruit, and then rushed down to the tabernacle to cover the next meeting.

Herald circulation zoomed, because everyone wanted to read Billy Sunday's sermons. Previously, few persons

outside of Austin read the Herald, but during that six weeks copies went to nearly every state in the union and as far away as South Africa and Australia.

Other papers did not give Billy Sunday the coverage the Herald did, but the preacher never showed the Herald any special favor while he was here. Only once did Billy Sunday come into the office of the Herald where Mr. and Mrs. Skinner were working. Then he just walked in, tossed some subscriptions on the counter of the little office, and strode out again.

The Skinners began printing 2,800 extra papers a day, to sell later. The extra issues were tied into bundles. Shortly after Billy Sunday moved on, a stranger entered the Herald office one day and saw the stacks of papers.

"What are those?" the man asked.

"Those are the Sunday papers," answered Skinner.

"What! Do you print a Sunday paper here?"

"Oh, those are the Billy Sunday papers," said Skinner.

When all late orders were filled, every one of the 2,800 bundles of papers were sold.

Billy Sunday helped the churches too. More than a thousand names were added to the county membership rolls by the increased church activity Billy Sunday inspired. The Methodists built a new church and so did the Presbyterians. St. Olaf Lutheran church was enlarged and church attendance went up everywhere in the county.

New subscribers the Herald gained by complete coverage of the sermons stayed with it. The paper grew faster than its rivals.

Two years later the Skinners covered another big news story under trying circumstances. The month of June, 1908, brought a series of countywide storms and tornados that culminated on Saturday afternoon, June 20.

During the previous week there had been severe electrical storms in the county. Thursday night a tornado hit Adams, and small twisters were reported in Dexter and Sargeant villages. On Friday night an electrical storm swept the county and killed livestock and burned several barns.

Just before 4 p.m. Saturday, people in Austin saw a dense black cloud scudding in from the southwest. It passed directly over the town wrecking buildings and destroying trees. Roofs were ripped from Hormel buildings and valuable produce was destroyed by the rain and hail. Hail riddled Kinsman's greenhouse, and killed hogs and horses in the fields.

The next day the Red Cedar river flooded and on Monday morning the rushing water took out the iron Water street bridge. All bridges were under water, and a row boat could be used near Main street. The Skinners managed to get out a paper about the size of a pocket handkerchief.

Other storms and fire disasters have been reported in the pages of the Herald, but none as severe as the tornado that struck Austin August 20, 1928. The air was hot and muggy that afternoon. At 4:45 a whirling black cone damaged buildings at the fairgrounds, lifted briefly and then smashed with all its fury into the center of the city.

Herald reporters rushed onto Main street and saw the greatest destruction wrought by a disaster in the history of the county. The steeple on St. Olaf Lutheran church was smashed, and the heart of the business district was a mass of tumbled brick walls and shattered

windows. About 300 children, who had seen Richard Dix in "Warming Up" left the Park theater five minutes before the tornado smashed the auditorium.

At the Austin municipal plant a 150-foot brick chimney came crashing down, and the roof fell on expensive machinery.

Whirling across the east side, the tornado wrecked many homes and uprooted blocks of trees. In the Milwaukee railroad yards a train of 15 refrigerator cars were swept from the tracks.

On that tragic day property damage exceeded $1,250,000 and five persons were killed.

THE END

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Readers seeking detailed information about Mower county history can find it in the following printed sources:

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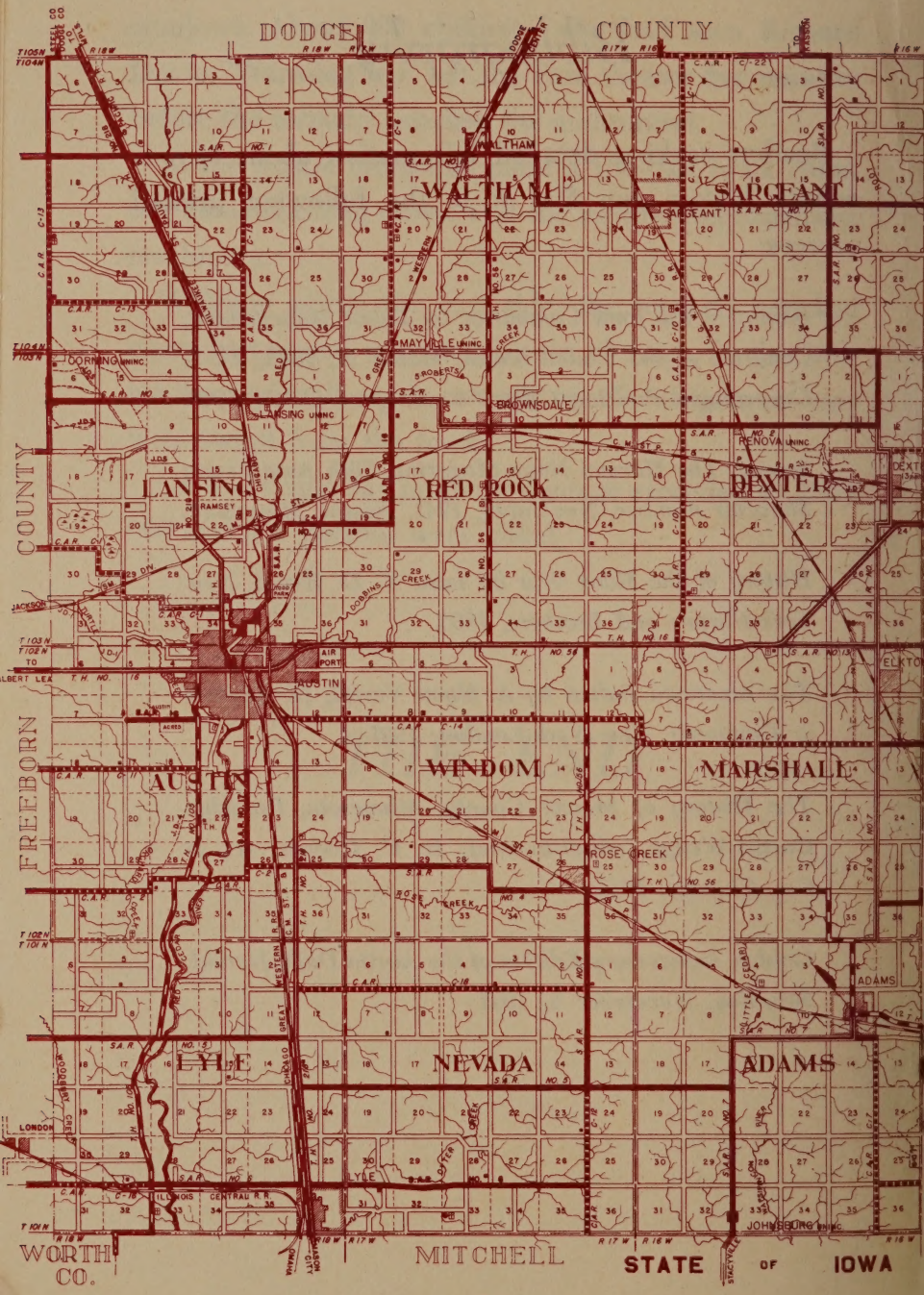
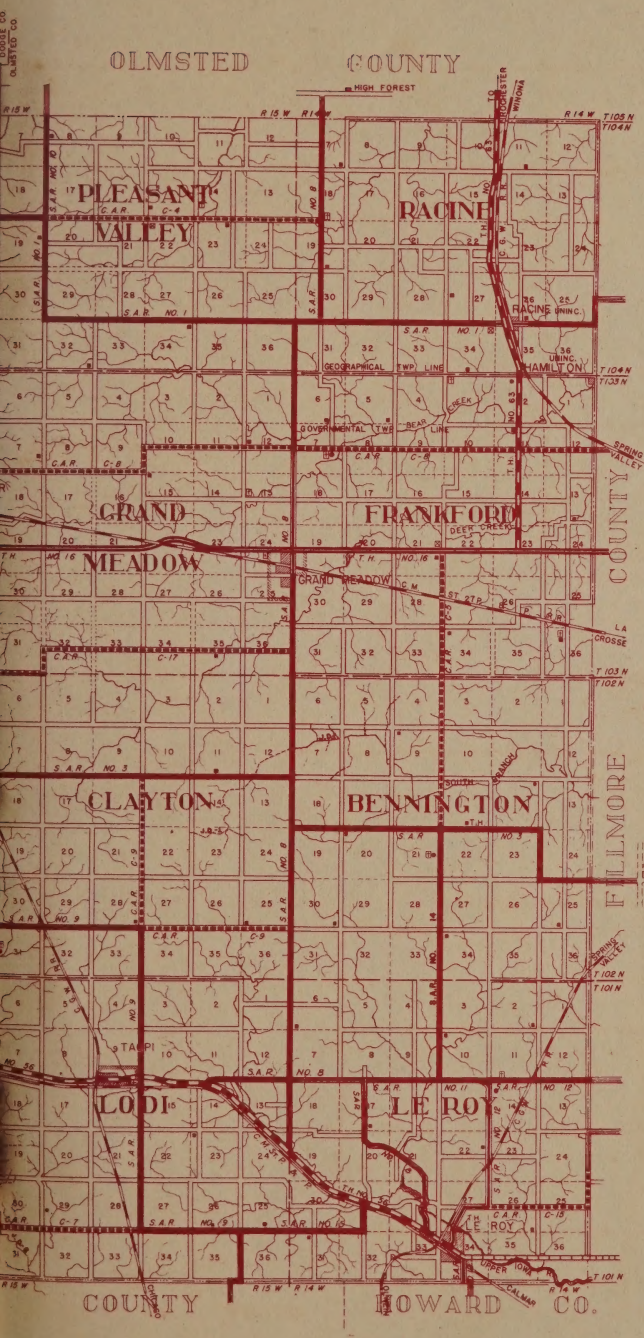

DODGE COUNTY
ADOLPHO
WALTHAM
SARGEANT
LANSING
RED ROCK
DEXTER
AUSTIN
WINDOM
MARSHALL
LYLE
NEVADA
ADAMS
COUNTY
FREEBORN
WORTH CO.
MITCHELL
STATE OF IOWA



HIGHWAY MAP OF MOWER COUNTY MINNESOTA

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS

OFFICE, COUNTY ENGINEER AUSTIN, MINNESOTA

JAN. 1, 1947

REVISED

SCALE OF MILES

0 1/2 1 2 3

LEGEND

- TRUNK HIGHWAY - PAVEMENT
- TRUNK HIGHWAY - BITUMINOUS
- TRUNK HIGHWAY - GRAVEL
- STATE AID RD. - BITUMINOUS
- STATE AID RD. - GRAVEL OR ROCK
- COUNTY AID RD. - BITUMINOUS
- COUNTY AID RD. - GRAVEL OR ROCK
- TOWNSHIP ROAD
- SCHOOL HOUSE
- CHURCH
- RAILROAD
- CEMETERY
- SECTION LINE
- TOWNSHIP LINE
- COUNTY LINE
- VILLAGE CORP. LIMITS
- TOWN HALL OR T.H.

STATE COUNTY NUMBER 50

CHURCH LITHOGRAPH INC
ALBERT LEA, MINNESOTA